

Research Paper

Effect of Life Skills Training on Aggression of Adolescents with Conduct Problems and Delinquency Proneness

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a pivotal developmental stage characterized by significant emotional, social and behavioral changes. Adolescence is a transitional phase of growth and development between childhood and adulthood encompassing a wide range of rapidly changing behaviors, identity issues, and powerful emotions. They often experience heightened emotional and behavioral responses, which can manifest as aggression and contribute to broader behavioral issues. Conduct problems encompass a range of antisocial behaviors, from minor oppositional acts to severe aggression. Delinquency proneness refers to the likelihood of engaging in criminal activities. Life skills training is an intervention that can provide the skill necessary for successful living. Imparting life skills is the basic attempt that has to initiate for strengthening the behaviour of adolescents. The aim of present study was to investigate the relation of aggression with conduct problems and delinquency proneness among adolescents and the effectiveness of life skills training on aggression. The sample comprised 400 adolescents (200 boys and 200 girls), aged 12-18, selected randomly from Haryana. The findings of present research revealed that there was a significant positive correlation between aggression and conduct problems & delinquency proneness. Further, the results showed that the life skills training intervention significantly decreased aggression of the experimental group of adolescents ($p < .01$), while there was no change in the control group.

Keywords: *Adolescence, Conduct Problems, Delinquency Proneness, Aggression and Life Skills Training*

Adolescence has been described as a period of reconstruction, characterized by significant changes in biological, cognitive, social, and emotional systems of individual. Adolescence is a delightful era of life that represents the transition from being a dependent child to become a self-sufficient adult. Adolescence, a turning point in one's life, it is a period of increased potential but also a period of greater vulnerability (Coleman & Hendry, 1999).

Conduct problems in youth is one of the most common reasons that children and adolescents are referred to mental health clinics. Conduct problems comprise of a broad spectrum of "acting-out" behaviours, ranging from relatively minor oppositional behaviour such as

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temper tantrums and yelling to more serious forms of antisocial behaviour such as stealing, verbal abuse, bullying peers and physical violence. The term ‘juvenile delinquency’ refers to a large variety of behaviour of children and adolescents which the society does not approve to and for which some kind of punishment, or preventive and corrective measures are justified in the public interest. Delinquency Proneness is different from delinquency in the way that Delinquency Proneness is measured by an approximation of the probability that a child or adolescent will engage in delinquent acts if the environmental factors become unfavourable, however in delinquency adolescents fails to meet certain obligations expected of them by the society in which they are living.

Aggressive behaviour is a major problem among the adolescents and associated with a host of negative consequences, both immediate and long term, for both victims and perpetrators. The term Aggression refers to a wide spectrum of behaviours, in the psychological literature, it can be defined as any behaviour intended to harm another individual who is motivated to avoid being harmed (Baron & Richardson, 1994; Coie & Dodge, 2000; Geen, 1998). Aggression in children and adolescents poses significant challenges not only to their immediate environment but also to their long-term development and societal integration. Conduct problems and delinquency proneness have been consistently linked to adverse outcomes such as academic failure, substance abuse, and criminal behavior in adulthood. Despite extensive research, gaps remain in understanding the nuanced relationships between these constructs and the underlying mechanisms that drive these behaviors.

Life Skills are the competencies that assist people in functioning well in the environments in which they are living. Life skills have been defined by the World Health Organization (WHO, 1997) as “abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life”. Life skills include psychosocial abilities and interpersonal skills that help people make decisions, think critically, solve problems, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with the stresses and strains of life in a healthy and productive manner. Life Skills therefore, are the building blocks of one’s behaviour and need to be learnt well/adequately to lead a healthy, meaningful and productive life. The aim of Life skills training is to make a person aware of the environment around him and educate him about certain skills which individual may be able to use while confronting challenging situations. Once the person masters the skills, he can use the same in different situations. Life skills training is an efficacious tool for empowering the adolescents to act responsibly, take initiative and have control over aggression. The training programme aims at bringing comprehensive behaviour change in children. Overall, the anger management methods are based on cognitive behavioural interventions, which emphasizes cognition, feelings and behaviour. Generally, life and social skills training also reduces violence, aggression and destructive behaviours in adolescents and working on interpersonal function with improvement in mental health.

The purpose of the current study, therefore would be to determine the extent to which the life skills training would be effective to manage aggression among adolescents. Imparting life skills is the basic attempt that has to initiate for strengthening the behaviour of adolescents. The basic skills will help young people in coping with difficulties they face in their personal, emotional and social development.

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Objectives

1. To study the relationship of aggression with conduct problems and delinquency proneness.
2. To determine the effectiveness of life skills training (LST) on aggression.

Hypotheses

1. Conduct problems and delinquency proneness will be positively correlated with aggression.
2. The participants who receive life skills training will have significantly low score on aggression than the participants who receive no such training.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample comprised of 400 adolescents (200 boys and 200 girls), within the age range 12 to 18 years, selected randomly from private schools of Haryana state (Bhiwani, Fatehabad and Hisar districts).

Measures

- **Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 1997):** It is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire which consists of 25 items and items are distributed across five subscales (each containing five items): Emotional Symptoms, Conduct Problems, Hyperactivity, Problems with Peers, and Prosocial Behaviour. Internal consistency of the questionnaire is 0.73.
- **Delinquency Proneness Scale (Rigby et al, 1989):** It consists of 46 items. There are positive and negative items in the scale. It is a two-point scale, namely “True” and “False”. The higher scores indicate greater degree of delinquency proneness. Internal consistency coefficient ranges from .70 to .90.
- **Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Perry, 1992):** It is a self-reported measure that consists of 29 items and four factors: physical aggression (9 items), verbal aggression (5 items), anger (7 items), and hostility (8 items). The test-retest reliability of the questionnaire is 0.78.

Procedure

The participants were contacted personally and initial rapport was established, so that they give reliable information. Participants were administered the questionnaires of conduct problems, delinquency proneness and aggression. Pre-intervention scores were taken on the measures and after the scoring, the participants who scored moderate and high on conduct problems, delinquency proneness and aggression were screened out. Further N = 100 were divided into two equal groups of 50 each in experimental group and control group. Life skills training was rendered to experimental group with total of 12 sessions for each participant. After that post-intervention scores were taken on the measure of aggression for both the groups. Life skills training as intervention focused on ten basic life skills recommended by World Health Organisation (WHO, 1997). Keeping in mind the ethical considerations, some issues like career guidance, study habits and general self-management skills were discussed with the participants of control group.

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Statistical Analyses

In the present research correlation coefficient was computed. AXB mixed design (ANOVA) was applied with one factor (A) varying between-subjects (Experimental vs Control group) and the other factor varying within-subjects (Pre vs Post intervention scores) to assess the efficacy of life skills training on aggression among adolescents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present research was to examine the relationship between aggression and conduct problems & delinquency proneness and the effect of life skills training on aggression.

The statistical findings of the study are presented from Table 1.0 to Table 2.3. Graphical Representations is depicted in Figure 1.0. Table 1.0 depicts the correlation coefficients showing relationship among Conduct Problems & Delinquency Proneness and Aggression.

Tables 2.1 to 2.3 show Means, SDs, F-ratios, ANOVA summary between groups (Experimental-Control) and test scores (Pre-Post) and Interaction Means of Aggression scores.

Table 1.0: Correlation Matrix of Conduct Problems & Delinquency Proneness with Aggression

Pearson Correlation	Mean	SD	Conduct Problems	Delinquency Proneness
Aggression	85.94	17.56	.617**	.636**
Physical Aggression	26.95	7.13	.531**	.484**
Verbal Aggression	15.07	3.66	.448**	.425**
Anger	20.22	5.58	.562**	.463**
Hostility	23.59	6.01	.378**	.595**

**p<.01

The results (Table 1.0) of the present study revealed that the total aggression score was positively correlated with conduct problems ($r=0.617^{**}$, $p<.01$) and delinquency proneness ($r=0.636^{**}$, $p<.01$) in a significant manner. The findings get support from previous researches in which children with conduct problems are at risk for engaging in illegal activities, although only a small subgroup of children with conduct problems account for the majority of delinquent acts (Frick & Loney, 1999; Moffitt, 1993). The previous findings corroborated the present research which showed that children and adolescents with conduct problems often display aggressive behaviors, which can increase their susceptibility to delinquent activities (Moffitt, 2018). The presence of aggression can also reflect underlying emotional and cognitive difficulties, which further exacerbate the risk of engaging in delinquent activities (Fite, Pardini, & Frick, 2020).

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Table 2.1: Comparison of Means, SDs and F-ratios of Experimental-Control groups and Pre-Post intervention scores of Aggressions

Variables	Levels	Mean	SD	F-Ratio
Groups	Experimental	87.65	16.01	40.946**
	Control	98.96	12.93	
Test Score	Pre-Intervention	99.08	12.23	42.702**
	Post-Intervention	87.53	16.46	

**p<.01

Table 2.2: ANOVA Summary for Aggression scores

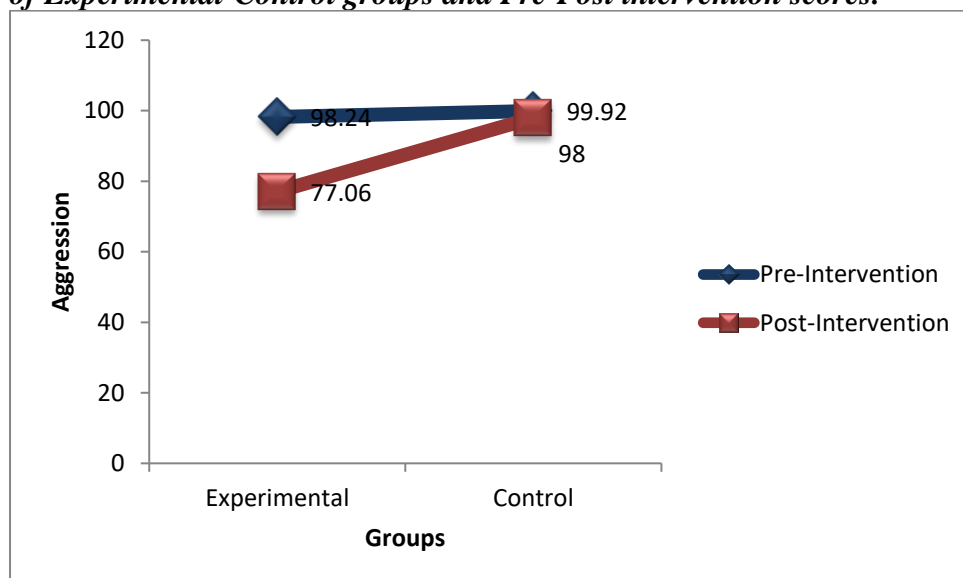
Source of Variance	SS	df	MS	F value
Groups (A)	6395.805	1	6395.805	40.946**
Test Scores (B)	6670.125	1	6670.125	42.702**
AB	4636.845	1	4636.845	29.685**
Error	30615.620	196	156.202	

**p<.01

Table 2.3: Means of Aggression scores showing interaction of Experimental-Control groups and Pre-Post intervention scores

Comparison Groups		Groups	
		Experimental	Control
Test Score	Pre-Intervention	98.24	99.92
	Post-Intervention	77.06	98.00

Figure 1.0: Graphical representation of Means of Aggression scores showing interaction of Experimental-Control groups and Pre-Post intervention scores.



Further, the present study assessed the effectiveness of life skills training on aggression and the findings with means and standard deviations of Experimental-control groups and Pre-post Intervention scores of Aggression. (Table 2.1) clearly revealed that the mean scores of Experimental group (M=87.65, SD=16.01) were lower as compared to Control group (M=98.96, SD=12.93) and the difference between the two groups was statistically

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significant ($F = 40.946^{**}$, $p < .01$). Also, the post intervention scores ($M=87.53$, $SD =16.46$) were lower as compared to pre-intervention scores ($M= 99.08$, $SD = 12.23$) and again, the difference stood statistically significant ($F = 42.702^{**}$, $p < .01$).

Table 2.2 represents the ANOVA summary for Aggression scores. It is evident that the main effect of Groups {(Experimental-Control) $F = 40.946^{**}$, $p < .01$ } and {Test scores (Pre-Post) $F = 42.702^{**}$, $p < .01$ } as well as Interaction of the two ($F = 29.685^{**}$, $p < .01$) came out to be significant. The findings are in line with the hypothesis of the study that the individuals who receive Life Skills Training would have a significantly low score on Aggression than the individuals, who receive no such training. Table 2.3 clearly shows the Interaction table of the means of Experimental-control groups and Pre-post intervention Scores. Figure 1.0 also supports this contention, which represents the ordinal interaction in graphical form and it further clears the picture i.e. there is a steep decline in the post scores of the experimental group whereas, for post scores of control group, this decline is quite understated. So, the hypothesis that the individuals who receive Life Skills Training will have a significantly low score on Aggression than the individuals, who receive no training, gets proved here.

The findings of this study align with existing literature demonstrating the effectiveness of life skills training in reducing aggression and improving psychosocial outcomes among adolescents. Naseri and Babakhani (2014) observed significant reductions in physical and verbal aggression following interventions focusing on anger management, decision-making, and communication. The result was congruent with Ebrahim et al. (2022) highlighted that there was a highly statistically significant reduction in aggressive behaviour among the participants after the life skills training than before. Also, this finding was following Abbasi et al. (2018) and Navidian et al. (2020) reported decreased physical and verbal aggression post-intervention, further validating the impact of life skills training on emotional regulation and problem-solving. Additionally, Amiri et al. (2020), Jahanbin et al. (2017), and Jamali et al. (2016) demonstrated the preventive and behavioral benefits of life skills training, supporting its application as an essential framework for reducing aggression and enhancing adolescents' psychosocial well-being.

It was conjectured that participants of experimental group being provided with life skills training showed improvement in aggression in post-intervention than the participants of control group who received no such training. The hypothesis proved to be true. The current finding accentuates the association of aggression with conduct problems and delinquency proneness in a positive manner among adolescents, emphasizing the interconnected nature of these behavioral challenges. LST equips adolescents with essential competencies such as emotional regulation, stress management, problem-solving, and interpersonal communication, enabling them to channel their emotions constructively and reduce aggressive tendencies. By fostering prosocial behaviors and enhancing decision-making skills, LST programs significantly mitigate aggression, thereby reducing the likelihood of conduct problems and delinquency. Integrating LST into school and community-based interventions not only addresses the immediate issue of aggression but also contributes to the holistic development of adolescents, preparing them for future challenges.

CONCLUSION

In brief, aggression among adolescents often serves as a precursor to more severe behavioral issues, including oppositional defiance, antisocial tendencies, and delinquent behavior. Adolescents who struggle with aggression are at higher risk of developing conduct problems

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and delinquency, which can disrupt their academic, social, and emotional growth. The current study highlights the effectiveness of life skills training (LST) in addressing the critical issue of managing aggression. Considering the findings, the researcher suggests counsellor and mental health professionals to adopt structured LST intervention in assisting adolescents with aggressive tendencies. Further, emphasising the importance of early intervention and the inclusion of structured LST programs in educational and policy frameworks.

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Conflict of Interest

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